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SOURCE Bashkimi, No 1610, 1950.TRACES DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVES

In October 1945, the first consumers' cooperative was organized in Tirana. Today there are 28 consumers' cooperatives, with a membership of 60,848 families or 223,297 individuals; 155 buying-and-selling cooperatives, with 326 stores and a membership of 11,106 families or 679,057 individuals; and six fishing cooperatives, with a membership of 948 [families?].

Today the consumers' cooperatives include 82.32 percent of the city population. These are the oldest cooperatives in Albania. In the beginning, their work was confined to distributing rationed items which they received from the state. This put a stop to the abuses that prevailed when private merchants distributed the rationed goods.

Later the consumers' cooperatives expanded their activities: they began to buy up agricultural and livestock products from the producers and set up various workshops, at a time when speculating merchants and middlemen were at the peak of their activities, and the lack of organized transportation had aggravated the food supply situation. The consumers' cooperatives opened stores for the sale of vegetables, meat, dairy products, poultry, fruit, and other products on the free market. Today the consumers' cooperatives have 407 stores, 35 restaurants, 168 bakeries, and 55 workshops of various kinds.

Besides their members, the cooperatives have supplied various government agencies and enterprises, including health institutions and the army.

The buying-and-selling cooperatives have been increased and now include almost all the Albanian peasantry. These cooperatives are the only medium of trade in the rural areas. They have linked the peasant directly with the city, eliminating the middleman and speculative trading.

Their work took a great forward step during 1949 with the establishment of reciprocal trading between the village and the city. In this way, the role of the buying-and-selling cooperatives assumed a more important

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character, and their work expanded still more. Since their formation, these cooperatives have done a business of 2,136,019,963 lek. Their purchase of farm products in 1949 was 517 percent of the 1946 figure. In distributing industrial goods to the working peasants, the cooperatives have had similar success.

In the past the fisherman was exploited by the trader, the owner of the fishing tackle and the fishing waters, and finally by the state, which exacted a 22-percent tax on the value of his catch. Thus the fisherman was able to retain only a small proportion of the value of his fish. Today Albania has six fishing cooperatives, with a membership of 948 families?, or 95 percent of all Albanian fishermen. The first fishing cooperative was formed at Shkoder; later others were formed at Lezhe, Narte, and elsewhere. Production has been increased, working conditions have been improved, and a fund for small investments has been created. The fishing cooperatives have developed modern fishing practices, as they are interested in fish conservation and the planned exploitation of all fishing waters.

The growth of the cooperatives has made necessary and urgent the preparation of trained personnel to direct these cooperatives. For this purpose the first training courses were opened in 1946. As the number of students was increasing, a regular school for training administrative personnel, such as directors of the cooperatives, accountants, statisticians, etc., was established in 1947. During this period 1,198 new personnel were trained. The work of improving their skills continues. This year courses for 280 new personnel are in progress. A brief refresher course also is being given for directors of regional combines and consumers' cooperatives.

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